



History of Murat Shrine Temple

"Tall oaks from little acorns grow"

— Edward Everett

What started out as merely an idea in the minds of five fellow-Masons of Indianapolis 88 years ago is today Shrinedom's fourth largest Temple—Murat.

Back in 1882 five friends got the idea they would like to see this city have a Temple in what was then the relatively new fraternal organization with the imposing name of Ancient Arabic Order of Nobles of the Mystic Shrine.

It could have ended right there—simply an idea that died a'borning—had it not been for the nature of those men. They were chaps who saw things through once they had made a decision.

That quintet consisted of John T. Brush, H. H. McGaffey, Charles F. Meyer, Theodore Pfafflin and Cortez F. Holliday.

Deserving of special mention among the five is Brush who was destined to become the new Temple's first Potentate and to serve in that post 13 years. Although known then principally as a businessman operating a large clothing store in Indianapolis he went on to leave his lasting imprint on the history of professional baseball. He became owner, or co-owner, of baseball teams—the Indianapolis team, the Cincinnati Red Stockings (now the Reds) and, more especially, the New York Giants.

Clinging to their idea, the five went to Cincinnati and on Nov. 17, 1882, were initiated into the Shrine by Syrian Temple. Thus that Temple became the mother Temple of what is now Murat.

Incidentally, another Indianapolis man—not a member of that original quintet—submitted his petition to Syrian Temple the same night the five were inducted, but he did not receive the degrees until later.

William B. Melish, then Potentate of Syrian Temple, who later

became Imperial Potentate, became intrigued with the goal the five had set and gave his unstinting assistance to their venture, working through members of the Indianapolis Scottish Rite Valley and Raper Commandery, No. 1, Knights Templar. (Many years later—March 13, 1909—Murat gave official recognition to Potentate Melish's aid in that original venture by making him an honorary member.)

Everything moved swiftly and smoothly toward realization of the goal and victory came March 13, 1884, when the charter for the new Temple was issued. The name selected for the new Temple—Murat—is of unusual interest. It is one of only three in Shrinedom that are NOT of Arabic origin or connotation. (The others are Aloha, Honolulu, and Sharon, Tyler, Texas.)

The name, "Murat," comes from "Bir Murat," an oasis in the Nubian desert. Murat is the only Shrine Temple with a French name.

When Napoleon's armies were in Egypt between 1798 and 1800 the general in charge was Marshal Murat, who later became king of Naples. Gen. Murat invariably made provision for his troops. One of the desert water holes, called "Bir Murat," quenched the thirst of those armies of Napoleon—and, incidentally, provided a name for the Indianapolis Temple.

With the charter for the new Temple granted, the five men demitted from Syrian Temple to become members of the new Temple. Three others who joined with them in signing the charter were F. C. Echelman and John W. Parke, both of Elkhart, and Charles B. Harris, of Goshen.

The first class consisting of 12 candidates was inducted Oct. 30, 1884, without any attempt at a Ceremonial proper. The first full and formal Ceremonial came within a month thereafter—Nov. 21, 1884—when Syrian Temple, headed by Potentate Melish, initiated a class of 15, including two who were destined to become future Potentates of Murat—Chalmers Brown (Potentate from 1898 to 1902—Murat's second Potentate) and Paul H. Krauss (Potentate in 1916).

(The members rejected several attempts of Noble Brush to retire as Potentate, but finally permitted him to step down in 1897.)

Murat proper initiated its first class, containing 27 candidates from all parts of the state, March 27, 1885. Among the members of that class were Gen. Lew Wallace, famous Civil War General, author of several famous books, including "Ben Hur," "The Fair God," and "The Prince of India," and governor of New Mexico Territory; Thomas Taggart, later mayor of Indianapolis and subsequently United States Senator; and F. T. Holliday, later Recorder of Murat.

Officers and other members of Syrian Temple were guests at the Murat Ceremonial May 2, 1885, when 18 candidates were initiated. Another Ceremonial was held November 27, 1885.

When Murat held its first annual meeting December 18, 1885, its membership totalled 105. What a far cry from Jan. 1, 1970, when it showed a membership of 17,632. Unusual recognition for such a young Temple came to Murat when it was only three years old. It was host to the Imperial Council Session in 1887.

Death came March 5, 1888, to Murat's first Recorder, Cortez Holliday. In that same year Murat sent \$100 to Morocco Temple, Jacksonville, Fla., to assist it in its work of fighting an outbreak of yellow fever in that city.

Among the 52 initiated Dec. 28, 1888, was Harry S. New, who later became United States Senator and Postmaster-General of the United States.

Soon thereafter came three successive acts of charitable generosity on the part of Murat—a contribution to aid sufferers in the historic Johnstown (Pa.) Flood; a donation to Kosair Temple, Louisville, Ky., to aid in its flood relief work, and one to the Indianapolis firemen's fund.

Murat's first singing organization came into being in 1891.

At Murat's first formal theater party March 14, 1895, in the city's Grand Opera House, the entertainer was DeWolf Hopper, who made famous the poem, "Casey at the Bat."

Fire that destroyed the old Scottish Rite Cathedral on South Pennsylvania Street where the Temple had been meeting caused cancellation of the 1894 Fall Ceremonial.

A Murat class of eight received the degrees at Medinah Temple, Chicago, the following May.

Another evidence of Murat's concern for others came when it sent \$1,000 to help relief work in San Francisco following that city's 1906 fire and earthquake.

That was the year the late Elias J. Jacoby, later to become Imperial Potentate, became Murat Potentate. Its membership had grown to 2,241. The class of April 12, that year, included Charles Warren Fairbanks, then Vice-President of the United States and former United States Senator, and James E. Watson, a congressman and later United States Senator. James P. Goodrich, later Governor of Indiana, was in that year's fall class.

During his six years as Potentate of Murat its membership grew to 3,781. Murat's physical holdings—now one complete city block on which are located the commodious Temple (with theater) and \$1 million Shrine Club—are a far cry from the beginning. Murat's first home was in the old Scottish Rite Cathedral on South Pennsylvania Street which was destroyed by fire in November, 1894.

After that, one Stated Meeting was held in the asylum of Raper Commandery, Knights Templar, following which Murat shared quarters in the old Stewart block on West Maryland Street with the Scottish Rite's Lodge of Perfection. On Dec. 4, 1896, Murat held its Ceremonial in the reconstructed Scottish Rite Cathedral on South Pennsylvania Street.

Meanwhile, there was much talk of need for Murat to have a Temple of its own. Potentate Jacoby went into action, naming a committee March 27, 1908, to act. It acted. In May of that year a plot of ground at the northwest corner of Michigan and New Jersey Streets—part of the present Murat holdings—was bought. More was added to the west soon thereafter.

Things moved swiftly. The cornerstone for a Temple was laid March 13, 1909, by the Indiana Masonic Grand Lodge, led by Grand Master Walter O. Bragg. Also present was Imperial Potentate Edwin I. Alderman, Cedar Rapids, Ia. The silver trowel used on that occasion by the Grand Master now hangs in the Murat Recorder's office.

That ceremony was followed by a gala dinner that night at the German House—now the Athenaeum—directly across the intersection. Speakers there included Imperial Potentate Alderman and

Charles Warren Fairbanks, whose term as Vice-President of the United States had ended the previous March 4.

Work on the construction proceeded satisfactorily. Formal dedication of the new structure May 16, 1910, was preceded by a huge parade led by Imperial Potentate Fred A. Hines, Los Angeles, who also conducted the actual dedication. A Ceremonial with 190 candidates followed.

Earlier Shuberts leased the theater proper and presented the first show there Feb. 28, 1910, for Murat members and their families.

In 1922, during the term of Potentate John F. Milnor, additional ground to the north was bought and on it was built an addition which now houses the Egyptian Room, Social Room, banquet hall (basement), administrative offices, third floor lounge and other space. (Incidentally, the decorations in the beautiful Egyptian Room were designed by Miss Helen Jacoby, daughter of Past Imperial Potentate Elias J. Jacoby.)

The next extension and enlargement of the Temple's holdings came in 1955 during the administration of Potentate Cecil M. Byrne. The remainder of the city block, except for a 65 foot strip along Alabama Street, facing Michigan Street, was bought. The small remaining piece was bought later. The apartment buildings and other private structures on the block were razed and the vacant area was converted into a splendid and commodious paved parking lot.

In 1968, during the term of Potentate Howard D. Foley, the cornerstone for the new \$1 million Shrine Club, adjoining the mosque on the north was laid. Work on the new addition was completed in due time and the club was dedicated later the same year.

Two members of Murat—both former Potentates—have risen to the top position of Shrinedom—Imperial Potentate. They are Elias J. Jacoby, Imperial Potentate 1918-1919 and J. Worth Baker, the incumbent Imperial Potentate, who was elected in 1969 and whose term will end at the 1970 Imperial Session.

Murat has been host to the Imperial Session three times previously. The 1970 Session will make four.

The first, as mentioned previously, was in 1887 when the Temple was only three years old. The second was in 1919 when Noble Jacoby was Imperial Potentate. The third was in 1941. Imperial Potentate Jacoby presided at the 1919 Session, as Imperial Potentate Baker will do at the 1970 Session. The Imperial Council Session of 1919 always will hold a special niche in the annals of Murat and Shrinedom. It was at that meeting that the idea that led to the establishment of the Shrine's great charity—its Hospitals for Crippled Children—first was presented formally.

It was suggested by Deputy Imperial Potentate W. Freeland Kendrick, then Mayor of Philadelphia and a member and Past Potentate of Lu Lu Temple of that city. He was elevated to Imperial Potentate at that Session. His suggestion was not acted on at the 1919 session, but held over until the 1920 session in Portland, Ore., over which he presided as Imperial Potentate. There, after considerable debate during which he yielded the gavel and took the floor and spoke in behalf of the idea, it was approved and the Shriners Hospitals for Crippled Children were born.

By Noble Wayne Guthrie